

News Release

Environmental Services Department

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Grazing Goats in San José are Not *Kidding* Around *Bats and owls also used to reduce pesticide & herbicide use*

San José—Starting July 18 and for the next week, several hundred goats will debut in their new role as “pest management specialists” at the Zone 3 water reservoir in San Jose’s east foothills. These amazing grazers can consume difficult to manage weeds including thistle without the use of a single ounce of herbicide. The goats will be on-site 24/7 under the supervision of a goatherd. **(To reach the Zone 3 reservoir, exit 101/South at Yerba Buena Road/East. Cross San Felipe Road and pass Evergreen College. The reservoir entrance is an unmarked road on the right immediately past Old Yerba Buena Road. Metal gates provide security, but the goats may be visible. Otherwise, contact ESD staff above for assistance.)**

Part of the City’s pilot project to achieve a sustainable, less-toxic land management system, the goats are supplied through a contract with Living Systems Land Management, LLC, based in San Francisco. Plans call for expanding the areas to other City locations including City parks later this summer. The intent is to protect local streams and the Bay by reducing the City’s use of pesticides and to encourage native species growth by suppressing weedy non-natives.

“Grazing goats are a great, natural alternative to pesticides in vegetation management,” said Kara Novogradac, Environmental Services Specialist in the City’s Environmental Services Department, one of several City departments coordinating efforts in the overall Integrated Pest Management Program. “The goats help us keep pesticides out of our urban runoff, which ultimately keeps local creeks and the bay healthy. Plus, grazing animals and grasslands have co-evolved over time, making goats a natural choice for many City sites.”

Bats and Barn Owls

Other “pest management specialists” being encouraged to join the City this summer are local bats and barn owls. To entice bats to perform their natural predation on mosquitoes and gnats in targeted areas, the City and community gardeners are mounting long-lasting, maintenance-free bat boxes on posts at eight community gardens including Jessie Frey, La Colina, Coyote Creek, Nuestra Tierra, Mayfair, Laguna Seca, Latimer, and Calabazas. There are 14 species of bats indigenous to Santa Clara County and they normally roost in caves, trees, twig piles, buildings, and bridges. They are one of nature’s most effective pest controllers with some species able to eat up to 1,200 mosquitoes an hour. However, even with the “low-cost housing” being made available for them, it might take up to two years for bats to move into any one site.

Barn owls hunt gophers and mice. To minimize potential damage to irrigation lines by burrowing gophers as well as prevent uneven footing in City parks, over 30 owl boxes will be installed at sites throughout the City. Already installed are those at Alum Rock, Berryessa, Noble, Penitencia, Santana and Wallenberg parks. Owls can lower gopher populations and then maintain them at an acceptable level. Predation by owls will lessen the need for City staff to expend resources on traditional gopher controls (baiting, trapping, and fumigating).

Pesticides in Stormwater

Everything that flows into the City’s 2,200-mile-long storm sewer system flows untreated into local creeks and the southern portion of San Francisco Bay, including pesticides. Pesticides can adversely affect water quality, disrupt fragile ecosystems, and be toxic to aquatic life. Reducing the use of pesticides helps keep local creeks and the Bay healthy. For more information about pesticides and stormwater, visit the City of San Jose’ stormwater web page at: www.sanjoseca.gov/esd/stormwater/pesticides.asp.

The Environmental Services Department is committed to encouraging sustainability while providing an array of environmental services. It administers four utilities including the Municipal Water System, the San Jose/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant, South Bay Water Recycling, and Recycle Plus (residential solid waste management). It also oversees Watershed Protection, which monitors water quality at local industries as well as in creeks and streams, and the Office of Sustainability.

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